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ABSTRACT

A leader's guide for a conference on delegating authority is presented. The purposes of the conference are: (1) to emphasize the importance of delegation of authority in effective work management; (2) to discuss the theory, principles and procedures pertaining to delegation of authority; (3) to point out methods of control to decrease the likelihood of errors by those to whom authority is delegated; and (4) to discuss the more common practical problems in connection with delegation of authority. The guide contains the following sections: (1) Extent of Delegation of Authority, (2) Delegation of Authority Procedure, (3) How to Control Delegated Authority, (4) Practical Problems of Delegating Authority, and (5) Practical Exercise in Delegating Authority. (For related documents, see AC 014 430, 432-434.) (CK)

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TRAINING GUIDE

TG5-18-2

ED 078253

Supervisory Development Conference Series

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY:

Making Full Use of Your Team

AC 01443 1

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL
VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

MAY 1959

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GENERAL INFORMATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE LEADER

The general information in TG 5-18, "Guide for the Supervisory Development Conference Series", applies to this guide. In addition, the following specific information should be noted:

PURPOSE OF DISCUSSION

1. To emphasize the importance of delegation of authority in effective work management.
2. To discuss the theory, principles and procedures pertaining to delegation of authority.
3. To point out methods of control to decrease the likelihood of errors by those to whom authority is delegated.
4. To discuss the more common practical problems in connection with delegation of authority.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

1. Large blackboard, chalk, and eraser.
2. Supply of paper and pencils.
3. Copies of handouts.

NOTES

1. Successful use of this guide depends in large measure on careful and thorough preparation by the conference leader. As he becomes familiar with the material and begins to think of it more specifically in terms of his station's needs, he will probably wish to develop his own adaptations. This is strongly recommended.
2. If desired, the examples given in the text and cases given in Appendix A may be replaced or supplemented by others of greater local interest and applicability.
3. It is not intended that the material in this guide be covered in one session. The number of sessions will depend upon the extent to which this material is adapted and supplemented locally. Sessions of 1 1/2 to 2 hours are recommended.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY: MAKING FULL USE OF YOUR TEAM

INTRODUCTION

Topical outline	Discussion Material
Introduce topic	The VA in its supervisory training rightly emphasizes the importance of good human relations in good working relations. Undoubtedly, good human relations is one of the important elements of employee job satisfaction--and job satisfaction is generally a favorable thing for employee productivity. But having good personnel relations is not usually enough by itself to bring about high morale and, even where it is, it still doesn't insure good productivity. You have to have effective work management also. Probably every one here has seen or heard of work groups where the people were happy but the accomplishment was less than it should have been.
Define "Delegation of Authority"	Today we are going to try to iron out one of the more difficult problems of work management: Delegation of Authority. What is it "to delegate authority?" Well, let's consider the definition of each word separately.
Blackboard	*Write the following at the top of the blackboard as the definition is given:*

To delegate:	To entrust to the care or management of another.
Authority:	A right to command or act.

Introduce Bible excerpts	Why is it that in every organization of any size and importance at all, the head of the organization has to delegate authority? For the answer we can turn to a respectable source--and it is not a textbook on administration. It's the Bible. Let me read you some excerpts from the Book of Exodus. Moses had just led his people out of Egypt. The major crisis had passed. Now he was faced with a problem of administration. Fortunately for him, he had a wise old father-in-law by the name of Jethro, who should perhaps be considered as the first management consultant in recorded history.
Read excerpts	(Book of Exodus, Chapter 18, Verses 13 - 26, inclusive.) "On the morrow Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from morning till evening. "When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand about you from morning till evening? "And Moses said to his father-in-law, Because the people come to me to inquire of God; "When they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between a man and his neighbor, and I make them know the statutes of God and his decisions.

"Moses' father-in-law said to him, What you are doing is not good.

"You and the people with you will wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you; you are not able to perform it alone.

"Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God, and bring their cases to God;

"And you shall teach them the statutes and the decisions, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do.

"Moreover choose able men from all the people, such as fear God, men who are trustworthy and who hate a bribe; and place such men over the people as rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.

"And let them judge the people at all times; every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves; so it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you.

"If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.

"So Moses gave heed to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.

"And they judged the people at all times; hard cases they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves."

Advantages of delegating authority

Q. From the account I have just read, will someone tell me one of the principal advantages of delegation of authority from the standpoint of being a Chief?

Prevents bottleneck

- It keeps him from being a bottleneck cutting down the flow of of work.

Saves him from over-work

- It saves him from over-work. (According to the text, Moses had to work "from morning unto evening" and, in Jethro's words, there was danger he would "wear out.")

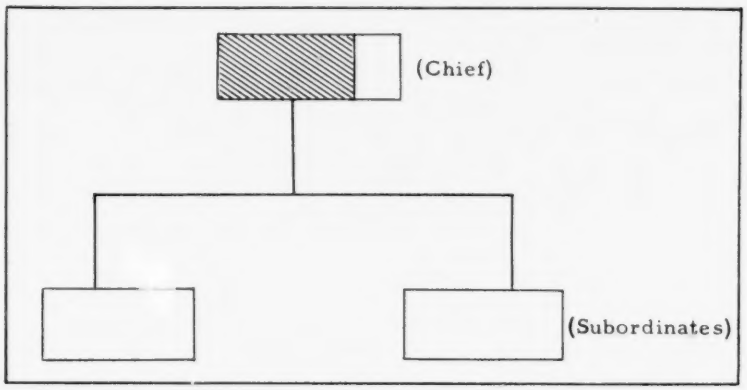
Frees him for more important tasks

- It frees him for the accomplishment of more important tasks. (In Moses' case these more important tasks, as Jethro said, were acting as intermediary between God and the people and judging the more difficult cases.)

If the instructor wishes, he can show the above advantages graphically by preparing the following sketches beforehand if station facilities permit, or by sketching them on the blackboard.

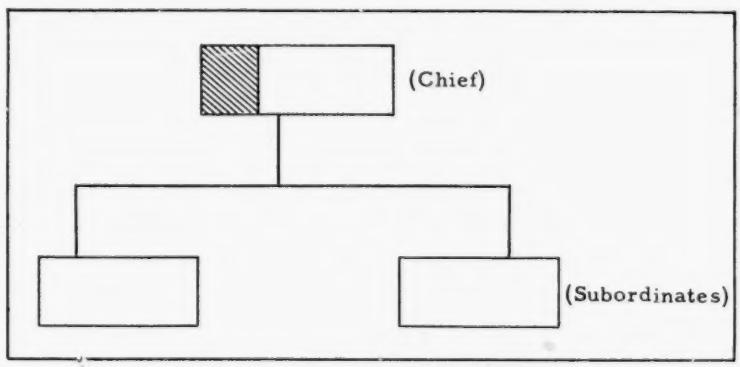
Charts or board work

Let's take a supervisor who doesn't want to delegate authority. He may spend 75%, or more, of his time on work that could be done by his subordinates.



But let us suppose he delegates some of his duties to his subordinates. Now he can spend up to 75% of his time on the more important duties of his position.

Erase shading in the top box and reshade it so it looks like this.



Helps to develop subordinates

There is another advantage to delegation of authority, not mentioned in the excerpts about Moses. Through delegating authority the Chief helps develop the abilities of his subordinates. He lets them "try their wings".

EXTENT OF DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

Topical outline	Discussion Material
Discuss extent to which authority may be delegated	**Q. To what extent can authority be delegated by a supervisor?** *The leader should explain that we are speaking here of a supervisor who is not a so-called "working supervisor," e.g., does not usually work personally and directly on the product which his unit puts out. The working supervisor is not concerned with delegating authority to the extent that he actually performs the same kind of work as the line employees under him.*
Not legal in some cases	**Q. Can all authority be delegated?** - No, a supervisor can't delegate all of his authority. In some cases it wouldn't be legal; in others, the terms on which the authority was originally delegated to him prohibits his passing it along to anyone else.
Example	Example: A manager may say to his assistant manager, "You can sign my name to routine station bulletins but make sure you personally do it. I don't want you to let anybody else sign my name without my express permission".
Retain authority on major items	A supervisor should retain authority at least on the most major matters, or on those that for other reasons could not not feasibly be delegated to subordinates. If he doesn't do that, he's not just delegating--he's abdicating. For instance, it would be a poor supervisor who, having four sections working in close proximity, allowed each chief to set for his individual section the policy on coffee breaks--not that this matter is necessarily an important one, but you shouldn't have four different policies on it within one division.
Matters that can cause trouble if delegated	The matters which the good higher level supervisor will reserve for his personal performance may, however, be very few indeed. Generally they are those which can cause trouble if you delegate them. Among these are: 1. The power to discipline. 2. Responsibility for maintaining morale. You may call upon others to carry out assignments that will improve morale, but you can't ask anyone else to maintain it. 3. Duties that are so technical that they may be beyond a subordinate's skill. 4. Duties that involve a trust or confidence. The better working organizations generally are those in which the subordinate supervisors have authority substantially coextensive with their responsibilities, while the top man concentrates on doing the job of: 1. seeing that his subordinates are taught in advance how to exercise their authority; 2. checking as necessary; and,

3. formulating program plans and activities, work improvement, setting standards, evaluating performance and personnel, and taking appropriate action thereon.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY PROCEDURE

Topical outline	Discussion Material
Discuss procedure	A supervisor in a modern organization, whether he is at the top, middle, or lower management level, has the same reasons for delegating authority that Moses had. But how, from the standpoint of procedure, does he do it?
"Express" delegation of authority	Well, there are two main classes of delegation of authority: the first class, which is the one we usually have in mind when we talk about delegating authority, is the one in which the delegation is made formally and explicitly--the "express" delegation of authority. Generally such delegation is made in writing. It's also possible, of course to delegate authority expressly and orally, but this is usually a less desirable method for important, more or less permanent, delegations. Quite often the formal express delegations of authority are published in manuals, bulletins, memorandums or similar formal publications.
	Q. What, would you say, are some of the characteristics which are generally found in the ideal formal expressed delegation of authority?
Characteristics of formal type	1. The nature and bounds of the authority granted are clear.
	2. The effective date upon which the exercise of the delegated authority is to begin is explicitly stated. (If it is to terminate at a definite date that, too, is stipulated.)
	3. All interested parties are notified. Not only is the recipient of the delegation of authority told about it, but also all those who would have no reason otherwise to become aware of the fact that the particular person concerned was empowered to exercise the authority in question.
Example	Example: If a division chief designates one of his section chiefs to serve as division chief in his absence, he should tell not only the subordinate but also all those affected by the delegation.
	4. Occasionally a delegation of authority may appropriately contain as well:
	a. A reference to the basis on which the delegation of authority is made.
	Example: Delegation of authority by the manager to a division chief may be based on authority so to delegate received by the manager from the Administrator.
	b. A reference to the broad guidelines which are to govern the recipient in the exercise of the authority.
Example	Example: "Within the provisions of paragraph____, Manual____, and my station memorandum of____."
	c. A reference to the contemplated method of checking from time to time on the exercise of the authority.

Tacit delegation	The second main class of delegation of authority is the "tacit" delegation. In this there is no formal instrument of delegation. The delegation is "constructive" or implied. Usually such delegations arise as the result of continued practice which has created an understanding among the parties that a certain authority has been delegated in a particular way.
Example	Example: By tradition an assistant division chief may be the one to evaluate all employee suggestions received in the division, even though he may never have been told to do so by the division chief. Or a division chief may have an understanding with his assistant that the assistant is to "take care of all routine matters", which phrase has come to acquire a content pretty definitely understood between them.
Risks involved	Whenever you have delegated authority you have assumed a risk: the risk that the recipient of the authority will not exercise it with the same wisdom that you would have shown--or at least think you would have shown: and along with that risk you have the uncomfortable knowledge that despite your having delegated the authority, you retain undiminished your responsibility for what is done by the person in whom you have reposed your confidence. For that is one of the rules of the game: even though the authority was actually exercised by someone else, you are just as responsible as if you had kept and exercised it yourself.
Final responsibility cannot be delegated	If something goes wrong you can't say to your supervisor, "I delegated that authority to Joe and he was the one who goofed, so you can't blame me." You can hold Joe responsible to you, but you can't use him as an excuse to those to whom you are responsible. You are the one who decided that Joe could and should be delegated that authority. If your judgment was wrong, you must bear the consequences. From one point of view this presents an unhappy dilemma for us supervisors. If we don't delegate authority, we may well become bottlenecks. We will probably have to work extra hard and still not get the job done. And we won't be developing people to help us with the workload or to increase their capacity to step into more responsible positions. On the other hand, if we delegate authority we can break this bottleneck but the person to whom we have entrusted it may make mistakes, and we are the ones left holding the bag.

HOW TO CONTROL DELEGATED AUTHORITY

Topical outline	Discussion Material
Need for controls	What is the answer to this puzzle? How can we keep to a minimum the commission of errors by those to whom we have delegated authority?
Introduce cases	Let's consider some situations in which the delegator violated some principles of delegation of authority. Through a discussion of these cases, perhaps we can determine some guides that will help us to guard against the errors that were made.

HANDOUT

Distribute Appendix A, which presents cases developed to illustrate certain problems in delegating authority. Give conferees time to read each case before discussing it. Caution them not to read ahead.

Discuss cases

Case 1

Q. Who was at fault in this situation? Why?

The group will gradually come to the conclusion that the division chief was remiss in not making it clear to Hardy that he was to assist Scott with this report. Also, the division chief might have delegated authority to Scott to require Hardy's assistance. As it was Scott had the responsibility for the project without the authority necessary to get it done. (Trainees may raise the question about the desirability of giving one supervisor authority over another at the same level. Of course, such delegation can be made for only one project or job and should be rotated.) WRITE ON THE BLACKBOARD (underlined item only).

Delegation should be clear and precise

1. Make sure the delegation of authority is as clear and precise as we can make it.

Get it down in writing, if that is feasible, and discuss it with your subordinate so you'll both understand what the delegation is supposed to cover.

Case 2

Q. What's wrong with this situation?

Group discussion should bring out the fact that while the subordinates to whom the authority was delegated had the requisite technical skills and knowledges, they had no understanding of basic attitudes and policies. WRITE THE FOLLOWING ON THE BLACKBOARD.

Wait until he knows how to use the authority. Train him as necessary

2. Try to avoid delegating authority until you have had a chance to make sure the recipient knows how to use it.

Give the subordinate beforehand the training he needs in how the authority should be exercised. This means, incidentally, that he must not only have the technical skill and knowledge, and a knowledge of the broad guidelines that are applicable, but he must also have a sympathetic comprehension of the principles and attitudes underlying the exercise of the authority. Very often, in the field of administration, making a proper decision depends not alone on technical knowledges and skills, but on an understanding of certain basic attitudes and policies which may not even have been committed to writing.

Example

Example: To take an analogy from the field of sports, a baseball manager may like his base runners to be daring and aggressive, to take chances, to run "high, wide and handsome" with all the risks that style of baseball entails. Naturally, he puts on the base lines coaches who are familiar with his attitude and who will give him the kind of base running he wants. Now, if they weren't acquainted with his ideas, the coaches would not be able to comply with his desires. They might be much too conservative in the way they handled the base runners.

There are many similar administrative situations where the one to whom the authority is delegated needs not only the technical knowledge and skill, but also an intimate awareness of how his boss thinks and wants him, the subordinate, to think.

Case 3

Q. What was the basic cause of Mr. Burns' difficulty?

Discussion should bring out the fact that Burns was not ready for such extensive delegation and that his chief should have proceeded more slowly in delegating authority to him, while at the same time training him to assume more responsibility.
WRITE ON BLACKBOARD.

Do it gradually

3. If you can manage it, feed your subordinate the authority in reasonable doses.

The doses should be small enough so that if anything goes wrong, the situation won't be beyond repair. As a matter of fact, if you throw too much responsibility on him at once, you may scare the daylights out of him. Increase the load gradually. Demonstrate your confidence in his ability to use the authority. Support him while he gains confidence and courage in exercising his new authority, and keep him advised as to how well he is doing.

Case 4

Q. What simple method of control by the delegator might have prevented this undesirable condition?

Draw from the group through discussion or supply the answer that the delegator should have checked until he was sure the Supply Officer knew how to exercise the authority wisely.
WRITE ON BLACKBOARD.

4. In the early stages of a subordinate's getting used to the exercise of authority, check carefully and frequently.

You should check until you're sure he knows how to exercise the authority wisely, otherwise you might wake up to find that the authority was exercised in a way you had never contemplated or desired.

How to check and when

How should a supervisor check and how often? No cut-and-dried answer can be given to this question. In some situations in which there would be immediate obvious results if the authority were being improperly used, no special purposeful check might be necessary at all.

Example

Example: If the subordinate supervisor in an office is allowed to grant annual leave at his discretion, the chief may not have to check on that discretion very often, because if there are too many people absent at once that fact can hardly escape his attention.

When to check

Certain other types of authority might need checking rarely, e.g., if you had an experienced time clerk, you would not expect to go over her cards more than once every three to six months.

	On the other hand, if the authority involved is a substantial one, say, making final decision on the retention or separation of employees in their probational period, a chief might want to make a spotcheck of a case or two every two or three months, to make sure that the standards being used for retention continued to be understood and applied correctly.
	Case 5 **Q. Was the Manager justified in expecting perfect performance in the division chief's exercise of the delegation of authority?** *Discussion should bring out the fact that it is not to be expected that delegation of authority will be exercised without any mistakes at all. WRITE ON BLACKBOARD.*
Expect mistakes	5. Don't "stomp all over" your subordinate when he makes a mistake in the exercise of a delegated authority.
	It is not to be expected that delegated authority will be exercised without any mistakes at all. It probably would not be even if we, the delegators, retained the authority. What we have a right to expect of subordinates is a pretty high batting average, consistent with the difficulty of exercising the authority concerned and with its importance. We don't have a right to expect perfection.

PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF DELEGATING AUTHORITY

Topical outline	Discussion Material
Theory and principles are clear	I think now that we have gone over what might be called the technical aspects of authority we would probably agree that they do not present any special difficulties. The theory and principles are clear enough. Why is it then that in a survey in which VA stations were asked to indicate the subjects in which supervisors desired more training, delegation of authority was in the very first place among the subjects listed? It must be that the practices in delegating authority are not entirely what they should be. **Q. What could be happening that would make people list training in delegation of authority as one of VA's foremost needs?** *With this question as a starter draw out or supply the answers underlined below. Elaborate by using the material supplied under each item.*
1. Failure to delegate clearly	1. Failure to delegate clearly Where there is uncertainty as to what has or has not been delegated, confusion, misunderstanding, and errors are likely to occur. Generally a failure here is to be attributed to the delegator rather than to the subordinate. The latter may be uncertain of just what he is supposed to do and, at the same time, he may be reluctant to bring the matter up with his supervisor for fear of being thought too eager to acquire authority or being thought unduly ignorant of what he was supposed to be doing. (His boss might say to him, "After all this time. . . . .".)

	Sometimes the lack of clarity is a semantic one: Different people may have different understandings of the same words, which is why face-to-face discussion between the delegator and the recipient is so important. Sometimes also the lack of clarity is due to the fact that the delegator does not have a clear picture of his own job before he subdivides it and delegates authority.
Central Office delegations to the field	A special problem arises, incidentally, when the delegator and the recipient are unable to discuss the delegation of authority due to the physical distance between them, e.g., delegations of authority from Central Office communicated by formal publications to field stations. But these delegations can be clarified, when necessary, through such methods as correspondence, informational material furnished with the issuance, field station conferences, the Administrator's meetings with managers, field visits by supervisory officials, and the like.
Evasive and obscure delegation	Consciously or unconsciously a weak supervisor is apt to be evasive and obscure when it comes to delegating authority. The chances are that, without being fully aware of his motives, he wants to be in a position in which he can claim he has not actually delegated the authority -- after all, such a delegation involves risks -- but can also claim, if the later situation makes such a claim advisable from his point of view, that he had in fact delegated the authority, and his subordinate should have known it. This practice enables him to hold his subordinate responsible at all times but is not, of course, a good way to do business.
Delegation need not be too detailed	To be fair to the delegator, though, it isn't proper to expect that a delegation of authority can be as exact and detailed as a catalog. Even in the simplest work situations it isn't usually practicable to be so precise and specific as to leave no room for judgment by the recipient. Indeed, if you had to write out such a delegation you might well find it more trouble than it was worth.
Usually, the delegation will be broad and general	You remember that the delegation Moses gave apparently said only that the "small matters" were to be judged by his subordinates, and the "hard cases" brought to him. He didn't define things further. Often the delegator can't. The more complex the function, and the higher it is in the administrative scale, the more likely it is that the delegation of authority will have to be broad and general, not only leaving room for the exercise of judgment as to what has been delegated, but actually requiring that judgment be exercised from time to time.
Example	Example: To take an example, a manager may say to his assistant manager, "I have to go to that fund raising meeting at the Federal Building. If anybody drops in, follow our usual practice. Take care of it unless it's something you feel requires my personal attention. In that case, call me". Now, that's a simple delegation of authority and reasonably clear, but the assistant manager still has to decide when to get the manager right away. If it's a Congressman, he had better call the manager. If it's a division chief, hopefully, he can take care of the matter himself. Otherwise, he can ask the division chief to come back later.
Story about manager's secretary	Along these lines, there is a classic story in one agency of a field station manager who had left orders not to have his staff conferences disturbed by incoming phone calls. One day the Administrator of the agency personally called the manager--or

rather, tried to, because the manager's secretary would not call the manager out. When she was reproached afterwards by the manager she wailed "but you told me not to intrude on your staff conferences". Was that really a justification? Probably we should think of every delegation of authority as having the following last paragraph even when it doesn't actually appear in the text: "And above all else in exercising this authority, use your head".

2. Failure to delegate proper amount of authority

2. Failure to delegate the proper amount of authority.

How much authority should a supervisor delegate? Obviously, there can be no one answer to this question. By way of general guidelines we might suggest, as we mentioned earlier, that the supervisor should delegate all the authority which he can legally delegate subject to meeting all of the following conditions:

a. There is some positive advantage in delegating authority, e.g., (1) the subordinate supervisor needs the authority for the effective accomplishment of his job, or (2) delegating the authority will free the delegator for more important tasks, or (3) delegating the authority is a necessary step in the development of the subordinate.

b. The subordinate can be expected to exercise the authority with reasonable success, i.e., he has the necessary ability, skills and knowledge and has received adequate training, and

c. The supervisor is not delegating any authority which must be personally exercised if he is to retain effective control of the operation.

3. Delegating too much authority

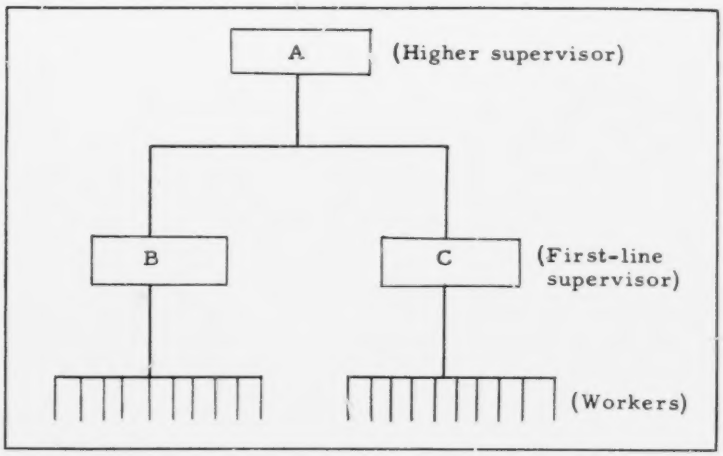
3. Loss of control through delegating too much authority

If a person delegates too much authority he is likely, as we mentioned, to lose control of the operation. More often, however, he delegates too little. There are even supervisors who won't delegate any authority at all. One hears of middle and top management people who completely undercut the first-line supervisors in their organizations by giving the latter little or no authority as regards approving leave, evaluating performance, making work assignments, and the like.

Chalk-talk

An employee normally looks to his immediate supervisors for such matters.

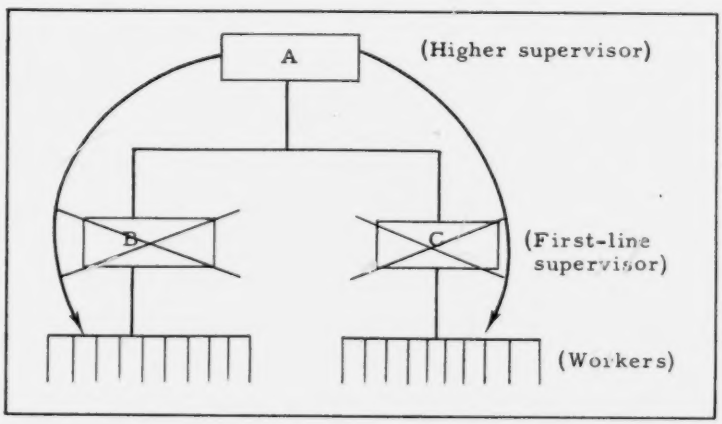
Draw the following sketch on the blackboard to illustrate:



When the higher supervisor undercuts the first-line supervisor, he weakens the latter's prestige. This process may increase to the extent where the first-line supervisor is practically by-passed, leaving him in a very weak position to accomplish his line job.

Change sketch

Draw X's and arrows on the sketch so it looks like this:



"Nobody can do it but me" attitude

Sometimes such non-delegators say "I'd be glad to delegate authority to my people, but they can't handle it; they'd make a mess of things and I'd be worse off than I am now, having to do everything myself." In most cases, the supervisor who has this "nobody can do it but me" attitude would be surprised at how sucessfully his subordinates could operate under a proper delegation of authority. Perhaps that is what he's really afraid of. Specialists in child psychology warn parents "It's easy to hold a child's hand. The hard thing is to let go." In many instances the same principle applies to supervisors.

Training supervisors to exercise delegated authority	Quite often, however, the supervisor who hasn't delegated any authority is right when he says his people couldn't handle it, but he doesn't have the insight to realize it's his fault - he has never made any effort to train his people to exercise authority properly. He has made his people into the kind of workers they are, and it is up to him to change the situation. It's a rare case indeed where a supervisor has under him subordinates who are of such poor caliber to begin with that he really cannot delegate a fair amount of authority to them.
4. Excessive checking destroys value of delegation	4. Excessive checking done by the supervisor Sometimes the value of a delegation of authority is in effect destroyed through the excessive checking done by the supervisor. A supervisor may continuously make what amounts to a pre-audit of a "100% sample" of all the cases in which his subordinate ostensibly exercises the authority. He hasn't done done himself or the subordinate much good by that sort of arrangement. That is really a false delegation of authority. The supervisor has to steer a course between giving up all of his authority and monopolizing it for his exclusive use. He's still monopolizing it, in fact, when he checks everything beforehand.
Another form of fictitious delegation of authority	Occasionally the recipient of the delegation of authority may turn out not to accept his responsibility and discharge it adequately. He may be reluctant to make decisions, perhaps because he has not been trained properly in the work, or perhaps because he has too lively a fear of what might happen if he makes a wrong decision. Very often a person in this position will try to find a pretext through which he, in fact, forces his supervisor to make a decision. (Sometimes, as we mentioned above, this is what the supervisor really wants him to do, despite the "delegation".) Then the subordinate chimes in with, "That's just what I was going to do, boss". Here, again, is an apparent but not a real delegation of authority. A subordinate who behaves in this fashion may have acquired the practice as a result of having been "stomped all over" whenever he did make a mistake in his work. There is nothing that will inhibit a willingness to take risks and to make decisions like the knowledge that even a single mistake may be extremely costly to your present and future status.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE IN DELEGATING AUTHORITY

Topical outline	Discussion Material
Explain practical exercise	Now, for those of you who have trouble in regard to delegation of authority either on the giving or receiving end--and even for those who at present think they aren't having any trouble--here is a practical exercise. I suggest you work on it as soon as you find it convenient to do so.
HANDOUTS:	*Give each participant one copy of Appendix B, "Instructions for Filling Out Appendix C," and two copies of Appendix C, "Delegation of Authority". Explain as follows:*

For delegators	First, for those who delegate authority: For each person to whom you have delegated authority, fill out a copy of this handout, in duplicate. Don't stop with the items on personnel management. You will, in almost all cases, have items of even greater importance in the area of professional or technical matters as well as some under general administration. Don't try to include every single authority because your list would be too long. Just put down major items. Next, give the list to the subordinate concerned and, after he has had a day or two to look it over, discuss the list with him. In that way you increase the likelihood that the two of you have achieved a shared understanding of what has or has not been delegated.
For recipients	If you are a recipient of delegated authority, and you would like your situation cleared up, or even if you don't have any real questions but would like to have things set down, you might see your supervisor to find out if he is going to use the handout. Maybe he would like you to work up on the handout your understanding of the major authorities that have been delegated to you. In either event, the completed handout will serve a variety of useful purposes, including the formulation of performance requirements and the planning of training.
Offer additional session	If any of you, after filling these out, would like to have an additional group discussion session on delegation of authority and your problems in connection therewith, please let me know. Assuming there is enough demand, and we obtain the approval of our chiefs, I will be glad to arrange such a session. *At the discretion of the manager this additional session may be required rather than optional. If so, the wording of the preceding and following paragraphs should be changed accordingly.* *A discussion of some actual statements of local delegations of authority (collected by the instructor before the session) would be helpful to the conferees in preparation for the practical exercise.*

SUMMARY AND CLOSING

Topical outline	Discussion Material
Summarize	Whether we have additional sessions or not, let's all bear in mind this thought: delegation of authority is one of the principal management tools for effective work accomplishment. We have to use it--we <u>want</u> to use it--but like any other tool, even simple ones such as the hammer, it is dangerous if you mishandle it. Learn how to use delegation of authority. Learn how to use it <u>well</u>. It will make you, your subordinates and your chiefs a better working team.
HANDOUT	*Handout Appendix D, "Delegation of Authority".*
Close Session	*Close with any additional appropriate remarks.*

APPENDIX A
(TG 5-18-2)

HO #1

CASE NO. 1

Bill Stokes, a division chief, assigned one of his section chiefs, Jack Scott, the job of preparing a special report. Stokes told Scott to get Jim Hardy, another section chief in the same division, to help him since this was a rush job. Hardy felt that he was too busy to help Scott very much, so Scott didn't meet the deadline. When Stokes asked for the report Scott was unable to supply it and was rebuked for failing to complete the project on time.

CASE NO. 2

Because of the nature of the work in your division, it is frequently necessary to answer requests for information, from the public, both in person and over the phone. The volume of these requests is such that you have had to delegate to your section chiefs the authority to handle them. Recently the Manager called you to his office and told you he had had several complaints regarding these contacts. In discussing the matter with him you learned that it was not the technical accuracy of the information that had been complained about, but rather the attitude and manner in which it had been presented. The Manager tells you that you will have to do something about this, since he doesn't want to receive any more complaints.

CASE NO. 3

Frank Burns was recently appointed to the position of Section Chief. Although he was highly competent in the technical requirements of the new job, he had had no prior experience as a supervisor. Harold Hanson, his division chief, assigned to Burns all of the administrative responsibilities and delegated all of the authorities which had previously been delegated to the former section chief who had held the position for ten years. Mr. Burns soon found that he was unable to handle the administrative details connected with the job, and finally became so swamped with work that he had to ask Mr. Hanson to relieve him of some of these administrative responsibilities.

CASE NO. 4

Shortly after World War II a small Army Depot in the Far East was found to have on hand enough paper clips to supply an entire Army for a period of ten years. Upon investigation, it was ascertained that a Supply Officer, who had the authority to order them delegated to him, went a little wild and gradually accumulated this enormous supply.

CASE NO. 5

Albert Staley, a division chief, had handled over a considerable period of time a number of important matters which had been delegated to him by Fred Watson, the station manager. One day recently, in making a decision concerning a relatively minor matter, Staley committed an error in judgment. Sometime later this error caused some slight embarrassment to Mr. Watson, who immediately called Staley to his office and proceeded to "stomp all over him" for the error.

APPENDIX B
(TG 5-18-2)

HO #2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING OUT APPENDIX C

Item 1. - Insert date on which handout is prepared.

Item 2. - Insert name, title, and organization of person delegating authority.

Item 3. - Insert name, title, and organization of person receiving authority.

Item 4. - State specifically but concisely each authority granted, grouping authorities in the following areas:

Area A: List hereunder the major personnel management authorities granted. For example, delegated authorities in this category might include such items as: (1) "To make final selection of personnel for your unit from among those eligible candidates referred through the personnel division", (2) "To initiate recommendations for letters of commendation, incentive awards, and other forms of recognition for meritorious employee performance". (3) "To approve (for employees of your unit) attendance at off-the-job training courses". (4) "To initiate recommendations for disciplinary actions for employees of your unit where the action proposed is a reprimand or some more serious penalty."

Area B: List under this item the major authorities granted in this area, e.g., "Requisition supplies, repairs, and alterations"; "Act in absence of"; "Evaluate suggestions"; "Decide on priority of work", etc.

Area C: List under this item authorities having to do with the particular functional content of the job. To take a fictitious example, for a Claims Examiner this might consist of such items as: (1) "Give final approval to claims which conform in all respects to requirements of par._____ of our Audit Manual." (2) "Disapprove claims which do not comply with Section_____", (3) "Draft decision as to all claims in which the question of retroactive authorization is involved", and, (4) "Return to employee, for clarification, all claims in which employee has submitted inadequate or contradictory information."

Item 5. - Fill in appropriately, e.g.; "Memorandum of (date)", or "Tacit delegation", or "Verbal instructions at staff conference on (date)", or "Previous verbal instructions, hereby confirmed", etc.

Item 6. - Fill in appropriately, e.g., a supervisor might wish to delegate to a subordinate supervisor authority to approve or disapprove requests for ordinary annual or sick leave, but not requests for advanced annual or sick leave, and he might note such limitations in the "Remarks" column. If of significance, the effective date of the delegation of authority may be shown here. If authority terminates on a definite date, this may be shown also.

APPENDIX C
(TG 5-18-2)

HO #3

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

1. Date _____

2. FROM:

3. TO :

4. NATURE OF AUTHORITY GRANTED: 5. HOW INITIATED 6. REMARKS

AREA A: Personnel Management

Area B: General Administration

Area C: Professional or Technical

(If more space is needed, use reverse side.)

APPENDIX D
(TG 5-18-2)

HO #4

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

1. Delegation of authority is one of the principal management tools for effective work accomplishment. Some of the major advantages of delegation of authority from the standpoint of the delegator are:

   a. It keeps him from being a bottleneck cutting down the flow of work.

   b. It enables his organization to achieve greater work output.

   c. If frees him for the accomplishment of more important tasks.

   d. It helps, when judiciously used, to develop the abilities of his subordinates.

2. As a general guideline, a supervisor should delegate all the authority which he can legally delegate, subject to meeting all of the following conditions:

   a. There is some positive advantage in delegating authority, e.g., (1) the subordinate supervisor needs the authority for the effective accomplishment of his job, or (2) delegating the authority will free the delegator for more important tasks, or (3) delegating the authority is a necessary step in the development of the subordinate.

   b. The subordinate supervisor can be expected to exercise the authority with reasonable success, i.e., he has the necessary ability, skills, and knowledge and has received adequate training, and

   c. The supervisor is not delegating any authority which must be personally exercised if he is to retain effective control of the operation.

3. Whenever we have delegated authority we have assumed a risk that the recipient of the authority will not exercise it with the same wisdom that we ourselves would have shown. Also we are just as responsible as we would be if we had kept and exercised the authority ourselves. On the other hand, if we don't delegate authority we may well become bottlenecks; have to work extra hard; we may still not get the job done; and we won't be developing our people. What is the answer to this unhappy dilemma? Actually there are several answers:

   a. We can make sure our delegation of authority to the subordinate is as clear and precise as we can make it. If feasible, get it down in writing. Discuss it with your subordinate.

   b. We can try to avoid delegating authority until we have had a chance to make sure that the recipient knows how to use it. Usually this is a matter of proper training. He must have not only the technical skill and knowledge, and a knowledge of the broad guidelines that are applicable, but he must also have a sympathetic comprehension of the principles and attitudes underlying the exercise of authority. Very often, making a proper decision depends not alone on technical knowledges and skills but on an understanding of certain basic attitudes and policies which may not even have been committed to writing.

   c. If you can manage it, feed your subordinate the authority in small doses--doses small enough so that if anything goes wrong the situation won't be beyond repair. If you throw too much responsibility at him at once you may scare the daylights out of him. Increase the load gradually.

   d. In the early stages check carefully and frequently until you're sure he knows how to exercise the authority wisely. Delegation of authority must not be allowed to degenerate into abdication of authority. Checking from time to time will insure that the authority is being exercised as contemplated or desired.

e. Don't "stomp all over" your subordinate when he makes a mistake in the exercise of delegated authority. Accept a high batting average, consistent with the difficulty of exercising the authority concerned and with its importance. We don't have a right to expect perfection. Nothing will inhibit a subordinate's willingness to take risks and to make decisions like the knowledge that even a single mistake may be extremely costly to his present and future status.

4. In the final analysis, let's bear this in mind: Delegation of authority is, as mentioned above, one of the principal management tools for effective work accomplishment. We have to use it--we want to use it--but, like any other tool, even simple ones such as the hammer, it is dangerous if we mishandle it. Learn how to use delegation of authority. Learn how to use it well. It will make you, your subordinates, and your chiefs a better working team.

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